

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

**MINUTES
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING
FEBRUARY 2, 2004**

ATTENDANCE: First Selectwoman Evonne Klein; Dr. Joseph Miceli;
Barbara Thorne; Linda Santarella; Robert Harrel

STAFF: John Crary, Town Administrator

OTHERS: Jeremy Ginsberg; Director, Planning and Zoning; Wally
Pugh, Chairman, ITC; Peter Truebner, Police Commissioner

CALL TO ORDER

The First Selectwoman called the Regular Meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

a) Resolution authorizing the First Selectwoman to negotiate for the acquisition of the property known as Procaccini

First Selectwoman, Evonne Klein, made a presentation to the members of the Board and the public on the need to acquire the Procaccini property for municipal purposes. She cited previous Town plans of development and also the Darien Parks & Recreation Open Space Plan that specifically recommended the purchase of this site. First Selectwoman Klein discussed the lack of open space within the community and said that the Town was over 97% developed. She spoke of meeting with representatives of the Procaccini family to consider the acquisition of the 17+/- acres parcel that they own. She said the Town had surveyed the land and conducted a title search. She also said that an environmental investigation of the site had been completed. She said that she strongly supports the purchase of this property. She also spoke of the adopted priorities of the Board of Selectmen that listed the acquisition of Procaccini as the Board's number one priority. First Selectwoman Klein said that she did not want to repeat the mistakes of the past by not buying the land for community use when it became available. She asked for the support of the other Town bodies that must approve the purchase and also of the public. The First Selectwoman asked Jeremy Ginsberg to speak on the vacant land that was available within the community and John Crary to discuss possible recreational uses that could be placed at the site.

Jeremy Ginsberg reviewed the Town's map of vacant land. He pointed out the small number of parcels that were in private hands and scattered throughout the community. He stated that the vacant parcels that were available were relatively small and generally would not be able to accommodate recreational uses such as a full sized athletic field. The only large parcels remaining within the Town were Procaccini and the Ziegler Estate.

John Crary reviewed a conceptual map that the Planning Zoning Department had prepared with the assistance of the Recreation Department. The site plan depicted how a number of recreational uses for the property could be placed on the site. These included a full sized athletic field, a 50,000 sq. ft. building that could house an indoor pool, a skate park, a playground, a picnic area and a nature walking path.

Board members posed a number of questions on the subject including the following: How many parking spaces are depicted in the conceptual site plan on display tonight? Nancy Sarner, GIS Specialist, said that the plan depicted approximately 105 spaces. Could an ice skating pond be built in the wetlands? Nancy Sarner said it was possible but the EPC Commission would require more information before it could be said with confidence. Sue Swiatek said that the various recreational uses that could be placed on the site are only limited by our imagination.

Barbara Thorne echoed Sue's remarks and urged the Board not to miss this opportunity to acquire property. She also discussed the Board's stewardship role and we would be remiss if we did not proceed with this purchase.

Dr. Miceli said that this was the Town's last opportunity to purchase a large piece of land for municipal purposes. If this sale was not successful then the Town may have to rethink the use of existing parks. For instance, he mentioned the need to consider making use of Woodland Park for active recreation purposes.

Bob Harrel suggested that the Town hold a public forum to educate and answer questions that may arise on the property and its acquisition.

The First Selectwoman said that this was the beginning of the process and she looked forward to talking with the public on this subject.

David Kenney, 14 Wilson Ridge Road, stated that, not as an elected official, but as a resident of the Town, he supported the project. He stated that he would like to know the cost of the acquisition and the build out and what percentage would be invested by the Town and what percentage would be raised by the public. He also asked for a timeline so that they would not lose the opportunity for the purchase. Mr. Crary replied that they did the survey, environmental search and appraisal and had pre-knowledge of the wetlands, and based on the appraisal, it now gives them the information to negotiate with the Procaccinis.

Flora Smith, 42 Hamilton Lane, commented that it was nice to be given an idea of what could fit on the property. She noted that, in her opinion, they cannot afford to have more housing developments or squeeze any more people in Town. She continued that the purchase solves many problems and affords recreational space for all ages.

John Davis, Parks and Recreation, stated he was concerned about what will happen down the road and how other Boards will look at the purchase. He noted that there were a number of groups that put together private partnerships and private money to help pay for the land.

Cheryl Russell, Chairman, Parks and Recreation Committee, stated she supported the project but to think long-term what is put on the property because it costs Parks and Recreation a lot of money in the long run to maintain it.

Joan Hamilton, 97 Hoyt Street, stated she was a neighbor of the property and asked that the Board do their due diligence with the liability of the Town and to factor in all of the operating costs. She asked that traffic be considered because the property is a main thoroughfare and it is a very densely populated part of Town. She stated that she welcomed it in her backyard. She also asked that they be respectful of the cemetery and noted there was a rail track there for the New Canaan spur line.

Gwynne Grimes, 55 Allwood Road, stated that the Town should do this immediately and to look at private vs. public funding. She stated that she would like it in her backyard.

John Davis asked that, if the Procaccini property was purchased, could the Dillard property be sold to fund it. The First Selectwoman replied that this was premature but it was an issue that was out there.

The First Selectwoman asked the Board when they would like to vote on the Procaccini acquisition. It was agreed that they will meet with the Board of Finance on Wednesday and will then have a public vote on Thursday, February 5th, at 7:30 p.m. The First Selectwoman noted that she would contact the newspapers.

b) Meet with Douglas Campbell, Chairman of the Darien Police Commission

The First Selectwoman reported that Doug Campbell was not able to attend the meeting this evening, however Police Commissioner, Peter Truebner, was present to update the Board.

Commissioner Truebner stated that the Police Department was the only agency that does not report to the Board of Selectmen as it reports to the Police Commission. He reported that the Police Commission consists of three people who are a resource for the Chief of Police. They talk over issues, personnel questions and budgets and matters of policy with the Chief. He noted that the matter of traffic comes up at every meeting. He reported that a year ago traffic enforcement did a ticket blitz — it helped with traffic

enforcement and will be continued when the weather gets better. The Commissioner reported that there was a swearing in ceremony for an officer, Jim Martin, who came from the NYPD. He added that Officer Martin was on the tactical patrol force in the Bronx and will have in-house training that will allow him to come aboard more quickly.

Commissioner Truebner reported that the parking situation at Gorham Pond was pretty well resolved and there was substantial compliance with the drop off places. He reported that they were continuing conversations about the Boy Scouts sale to put up additional tents on the premises.

The Commissioner continued that they had performed a test at the Police Department on the bullet proof vests the officers were using and he was pleased to report that the body armor material that they are using meets their specifications.

Commissioner Truebner reported that they are continuing to work with the Board of Selectmen for a suitable place to hold the fireworks in July that will also meet safety concerns.

The Commissioner concluded by stating that the Police Department was a smooth running department and they were fortunate to have a good leader in Chief McManus, the rank and file were dedicated and able, and he has confidence in the police force.

Dr. Miceli asked if the Police Department was fully staffed and Mr. Truebner replied they were fully staffed at 51 and that was a good number.

c) Meet with Wally Pugh, Chairman of the Information Technology Committee (ITC)

Mr. Pugh stated that he would provide an update on what the Committee is currently doing. He stated that the ITC Committee was formed in 1970 and he joined shortly thereafter. He became the Chairman in 1995. Mr. Pugh stated that the Committee was unique because its members are appointed by the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance. He continued that the Committee's charge is to develop a vision for information technology and to implement budget requests. He stated that the charge does not include the educational operation and the focus was on the Town. Mr. Pugh reported that they have one IT Department serving the Town, the Board of Education and the Library and they have developed a strong and reliable network. He also noted that there is one financial system for the Town and the Board of Education. Mr. Pugh noted that the four basic systems for the Town are: Financial, Geographic, Recreation and Police. He commented that they were very stable, however there were some problems with the tax system, but they were monitoring it.

Mr. Pugh continued that the ITC was working with a consultant, Blum and Shapiro, to provide a proposal to evaluate the present requirements and recommend the next steps for the Town's IT needs. He stated they had checked the references of Blum and

Shapiro and they had received glowing references. Mr. Pugh reported that he expected to come back to the Board with a recommendation. He encouraged the Board to approve the request for a transfer of funds to hire Blum and Shapiro to assist in project planning for the Town's future IT needs.

Mr. Harrel stated that he fully supported this project and it was a good next step. Ms. Thorne commented that to have all three pieces working together was a gift to the school. Mr. Peter Hovell stated that they need somebody to say the best place to go is here to bring computer services to the Town.

Mr. Harrel departed the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

- d) **Budget Transfer within the Capital Fund to permit computer software to be identified and purchased that will assist with the operations of the Planning and Zoning office and the Building Official**

RESOLVED:

That the following transfer of appropriations is approved for referral to the Board of Finance:

From:			To:		
Acct. No.	Account	Amount	Account No.	Account	Amount
X0118004-90002	Application Software	12,000	0118004-904010	IT Project Planning	12,000
	TOTAL	12,000		TOTAL	12,000

- ** MS. THORNE MOVED TO APPROVE THE TRANSFER OF APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$12,000 FROM ACCOUNT #X0118004-90002, APPLICATION SOFTWARE, TO ACCOUNT # 0118004-904010, IT PROJECT PLANNING, FOR REFERRAL TO THE BOARD OF FINANCE.**
- ** DR. MICELI SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

1ST SELECTWOMAN'S REPORT

First Selectwoman Klein reported that the Red Cross asked if they could fly a flag at Town Hall during the month of March for the Heart Association. She noted that she would check the policy to see if it could be done.

First Selectwoman Klein continued that she attended a SWRPA legislative breakfast and they discussed more cars for the railroad.

The First Selectwoman reported that she spoke at the Rotary Club and her comments about the vision for the Town and their priorities were available.

The First Selectwoman reported that she will be attending a meeting in Westport on Wednesday morning regarding the Indian casino situation.

The First Selectwoman reported that there will be a lunch for the Public Works and Parks and Recreation Department snowplowers for being extremely responsive in keeping the roads clear.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Mr. Crary distributed copies of the completed budget to the Board.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public present at this time.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

February 3, 2004	Board of Selectmen – Budget meeting at 5:00 p.m.
February 5, 2004	Board of Selectmen – Budget meeting at 5:00 p.m.
February 10, 2004	Board of Selectmen – Budget meeting at 5:00 p.m.
February 12, 2004	Board of Selectmen - Budget meeting at 5:00 p.m.
February 23, 2004	Board of Selectmen – Regular meeting at 7:30 p.m.

OTHER BUSINESS

(A two-thirds majority vote is required to add an item to the agenda).

**** MS. SANTARELLA MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**
**** DR. MICELI SECONDED.**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Donna DeVito
Telesco Secretarial Services